



SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Older Americans Month: A Time to Recognize Older Adults and Their Caregivers

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – Since its inception forty years ago, Older Americans Month has been a time for the entire nation to recognize the older adults in their communities. This year, Older Americans Month recognizes, “*What We Do Makes a Difference*,” in ensuring that the needs of older Americans are met.

Today, the older population is much different than it was during the first Older Americans Month in 1963 when only 17 million Americans were age 65. One in six Americans, or 44 million people, is age 60 or older. According to the 2000 US Census, Sedgwick, Harvey and Butler Counties account for 80,922 older adults 60 years of age and over. Of the older adults in Central Plains Area Agency on Aging’s tri-county area, more than 8,000 are over the age of 85.

It is projected that by the year 2030, the 85 plus population will be triple what it is today. In addition, there will be an influx of new retirees when the first members of the baby boom generation turn 65 in seven years.

The growth in the older population underscores not only the need for, but also the value of the support services for older adults in the community. Many older adults benefit from a program that allows them to live independently, even if they are not fully able to care

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for themselves. This program, the Older Americans Act (OAA), has been the foundation of services for older adults since its enactment in 1965 and is at the core of our national system of home and community-based care. The OAA has created a network of nearly 900 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). In Kansas there are eleven Area Agencies on Aging that provide support services for over 356,229 Kansans. According to the 2000 US Census, Sedgwick County has the highest number of older adults 65 and over than any other Kansas county.

These important facts help members of the community to understand the need for support services for older adults and their caregivers. Currently, over 22 million U.S. households are serving in family caregiving roles for persons over age 50 and that number will increase rapidly as the population ages and medical science continues to extend life. The Central Plains Area Agency on Aging also focuses on the needs of these caregivers of older adults, whose loving and selfless acts help make it possible for their older family members to remain in their own homes and community. The Family Caregiver Support Program, added to the OAA in 2000, provides grants to states to help communities assist family members who are struggling to care for their loved ones.

As you can imagine, our growing aging population places an increased demand on local agencies that provide services to older adults and caregivers. These agencies may lack sufficient resources to address everyone's needs. Many agencies report waiting lists for services like home-delivered meals that grow longer each day. That is why, we are working hard to ensure that Congress provides adequate funds for the OAA services. While the current budget climate in the states and Washington, D.C. makes asking for additional funding difficult, increases in federal appropriations are crucial to assure the availability of OAA services.

Over the course of this month, please contact your congressional representatives to show them your appreciation for their continued support and efforts to ensure the older adults in your community receive the support they deserve not only during Older Americans Month but whenever they need it.

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For more information on services for older adults and caregivers in Sedgwick, Harvey and Butler Counties contact Central Plains Area Agency on Aging at 316-660-5120 or 1-800-367-7298.

"The role caregivers of older adults play in this community is irreplaceable," said Sedgwick County Commission Chairman Tim Norton. "We want to do everything we can to make sure services for these individuals are maintained."

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